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LETTERS

FROM

GENERAL WASHINGTON

TO

SEVERAL OF HIS FRIENDS,

IN

JUNE and JULY, 1776;

IN WHICH IS SET FORTH,

AN INTERESTING VIEW

OF

AMERICAN POLITICS,

AT THAT

ALL-IMPORTANT PERIOD.

PHILADELPHIA:

REPUBLISHED AT THE FEDERAL PRESS,

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P R E F A C E

TO THIS EDITION.

THE following Letters are, at this time, republished from a Boston Edition, now out of print, as furnishing an interesting appendix to the Official Letters of GENERAL WASHINGTON, which have lately made their appearance.

PREFACE

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PREFACE

To the FORMER EDITION of these Letters, from which the
PRESENT EDITION is copied.

THE public will naturally be inquisitive as to the authenticity of the following letters. For every thing else, they will speak for themselves: and for their genuineness, the Editor conceives himself concerned to give only such vouchers as he himself has received. By the last packet he was favoured with a letter from a friend, now serving in a loyal corps under Brigadier-General De Lancey of New-York, of which he here subjoins a faithful extract. Pleased with the communication himself (and as he is not ashamed to add, instructed by it) he could not be easy to withhold it from the public at large: inasmuch as, in his judgment, it exhibits a fairer and fuller view of American politics, than the world has yet seen.

——— “Among the prisoners at Fort Lee, I espied a mulatto fellow, whom I thought I recollected, and who confirmed my conjectures by gazing very earnestly at me. I asked him if he knew me. At first, he was unwilling to own it; but, when he was about to be carried off; thinking, I suppose, that I might perhaps be of some service to him, he came and told me, that he was Billy, and the old servant of General Washington. He had been left there on account of an indisposition which prevented his attending his master. I asked him a great many questions, as you may suppose; but found very little satisfaction in his answers. At last, however, he told me that he had a small portmanteau of his master's; of which, when he found that he must be put into confinement, he entreated my care. It contained only a few stockings and shirts; and I could see nothing worth my care, except an almanack, in
which

which he had kept a sort of a journal, or diary of his proceedings since his first coming to New York: there were also two letters from his lady, one from Mr. Custis, and some pretty long ones from a Mr. Lund Washington; and in the same bundle with them, the first draughts, or foul copies, of answers to them. I read these with avidity; and being highly entertained with them, have shewn them to several of my friends, who all agree with me, that he is a very different character from what they had supposed him. I never knew a man so much to be pitied. "If I remember right, you have seen, and have some knowledge of him; but it is impossible you could form so just an estimate of him as these letters will give you. They contain also, as you will find, a deal of information, not to be had any where else: I assure myself therefore, you will thank me for the trouble I have taken in copying them for your perusal."

L E T T E R S

FROM

GENERAL WASHINGTON.

*New-York, June 12, 1776.**To Mr. Lund Washington, at Mount Vernon, Fairfax County,
Virginia.*

DEAR LUND,

THOUGH I wrote to you but a very few days ago, and have nothing new of much moment to communicate, I cannot deny myself the comfort of unburthening my mind to you, whenever I have a little leisure, amid the thousand anxieties and disquietudes that almost distract me. I know the goodness of your heart, and that you will attend to me with indulgence and sympathy, though it be not in your power any otherwise to afford me relief. There cannot, in the nature of things, be a situation so truly irksome to an ingenuous mind, as the being perpetually obliged to act a part foreign to our true feelings; yet this, alas! as you know, is, and must be my lot. I wear a countenance dressed in the calm serenity of perfect confidence, whilst my heart is corroded with infinite apprehensions, and I have no bosom friend near me, to whom I dare lay it open. Tell me, Lund, for you have long been privy to my most secret thoughts,—trusting to thy native candor, I have never hesitated to lay my heart bare and open to thy inspection; tell me then, am

I, do you think, more subject to fears than other men? For I will not conceal it from you, that, at this moment, I feel myself a very coward. Do not mistake me: I thank my God I have never yet known what it was to fear for any personal danger that might befall me. I am not afraid to die: why should I? I am afraid only to die with infamy and disgrace. And, if I am afraid so to die, need I tell you that I am ten thousand times more afraid to live, like Lucifer, a fallen angel. No, Lund, that were too much; betide what will, I cannot, and I will not, survive either my misfortunes, or my disgraces. Heaven knows how truly I love my country; and that I embarked in this arduous enterprise on the purest motives. But we have overshot our mark: we have grasped at things beyond our reach: it is impossible we should succeed; and I cannot with truth say, that I am sorry for it; because I am far from being sure that we deserve to succeed. That the British Ministry had meditated schemes fatal to the liberties of America; and that, if we had not opposed their first efforts to impose taxes upon us, without our consent, we might have bid adieu to every idea of constitutional security hereafter, I have not a doubt. Nay, I am so thoroughly persuaded of the unworthiness of their designs, and of the duty of every honest American to oppose them, that, dissatisfied as I am with my situation, were it to do over again, I would rather be even as I am than tamely crouch, whilst chains were fastening round my neck; for there is not, in my estimation, so vile a thing upon earth as a human being who, having once enjoyed liberty, can patiently bear to see it taken from him. I would, and I will die ten thousand deaths, rather than be this thing myself. On these principles, and these only, I first took up arms; but my misfortune, and the true source of all my uneasiness is, that though in good policy, as well as honour, these ought to be the principles of every American, I have long ago discovered they are not, and on this account alone I dread our

defeat. Our want of skill, our want of ammunition, in short, our want of every thing which an army ought to have, are all, no doubt, exceedingly against us; but they are all nothing to our want of virtue. Unused to the many arts and devices, by which designing men carry their points, I unwillingly listened to my own apprehensions, when early in the first Congress, I thought I saw a tendency to measures which I never could approve of. I reasoned myself, however, out of my fears, with no ordinary reproach on my own meanness, in having given way to suspicions, which could not be true, unless we had men amongst ourselves more flagitious than even those we were opposing. At length, however, when a continental army came to be voted for, my fears returned with redoubled force; for then, for the first time, I clearly saw our aims reached farther than we cared to avow. It was carried with an unanimity that really astonished me; because I knew, many who voted for it were as averse to the independency of America as I was. And they even ridiculed me for my apprehensions on that account; and, indeed, when they suggested, that Great Britain, seeing us apparently determined to risque every thing rather than that they should tax us, would never think of engaging in a civil war with us, which must necessarily cost her more than even America could repay her, I could not but hope, that I was mistaken, and that our military preparations might be a good political movement. In one thing, however, we all agreed, that, as the forces were chiefly to be raised in New England, it would be extremely rash and imprudent in the southern delegates to leave them in the possession of so formidable a power without any check. I need not tell you, that it was this consideration which, if I am to be credited, solely against my will, determined me to accept of the command of this army. We set out with bad omens; I was mistrustful of them in every thing; and they were taught to look upon me with jealousy. This soon manifested itself in

forming them to any thing like decent discipline. But I have, long ago, pestered you more than enough with complaints on this head. I knew not, however, certainly, that I had been appointed to this high station only to be disgraced and ruined, till about the middle and latter end of last February; when, contrary to my wishes, I found it absolutely necessary that we should come to open hostilities against our fellow subjects in the ministerial army. Doubtless common prudence required, that when we did attempt it we should, if possible, do it speedily and effectually: And, having all the reason in the world to believe that large armies would be sent against us early in the summer, I resolved, cost what it would, to cut off those already here, which would have given us such infinite advantages over any future reinforcements that might be sent, and this I believed was easily in our power; but, as I have already told you, nothing is to be done with our New England allies, unless they are let into all your secrets. I could not advance a step without communicating my intentions to the gentlemen in the civil department; a thing ever ruinous in war: It soon got wind, as I had foreseen; and it appeared, that the General of the enemy was apprised of my design. Still, however, I persevered in my purposes; which, in spite of all his care and caution, I was confident must succeed, and reduce him to the utmost extremity. But (as every military man must know) so capital a blow was not to be struck without the loss both of many men, and much property; for my design was, if they would not surrender by an honourable capitulation, to burn the town about their ears, and so rush in, and cut them off in their attempts to escape to the ships. And this, with our superiority of numbers, we certainly could have effected, though, no doubt, it would have been a bloody business, if they had not surrendered, as I think they would. But when, as I was obliged, I laid this before the Council and Representatives, they not only found a thousand objections to it, but absolutely restrained me, and

I could not have got a man that would have gone on what they called so desperate a scheme: Hence was I under a necessity of proceeding in that poor, slow, and unsoldier-like manner, which not only gave them an opportunity to escape, but has taught them to despise us. There is no forming an idea of the importance of such a stroke at that conjuncture. If any thing upon earth could have made America independent and glorious, that was the golden opportunity. I confess to you, I had worked my imagination up to such a pitch of high expectation, that my disappointment has dispirited me in a manner I never can recover. For, from that moment, I have despaired of our ever doing any thing truly great. Any little gleams of success, or fairer prospects we have since had, serve but to make our inferiority the more conspicuous: For what incidents can fall out to aggrandize us, who can be made great only by great and spirited efforts, when we have shewn that we wanted both the understanding and the virtue to purchase to ourselves immortal glory on better and cheaper terms than ever we can hope hereafter to have it? But, the worst remains yet to be told. Some of those very men who were the most forward to thwart me in this measure, had discovered a different way of thinking on other occasions, and, I am persuaded, that were the question put to them now, as to this city and the southern regiments, I should not hear a dissenting voice.—But, let me spare you.

After all this, you will again, I doubt not, as you often have, ask why I continue in a situation so disagreeable to me? I wish you had forborne this question, the truth being, that I neither am able, nor very willing to answer it. My resolution to hold it out as long as I can is dictated by my feelings, which I neither can describe to you, nor wholly justify on paper; but which, however, I find it impossible for me to disregard. The eyes of all America, perhaps of Europe, of the world are fixed on me. It has been our policy, (and, at the time, I thought it well founded) to hold out false

lights to the world. There are not a hundred men in America that know our true situation; three fourths of the Congress itself are ignorant of it; yourself excepted, there lives not a man at all acquainted with my peculiar circumstances. The world looks upon us as in possession of an army all animated with the pure flame of liberty, and determined to die rather than not be free. It is in possession of proofs, that it is so, under my own hand: I have always so spoken of it and I still do. But, you know how remote in my judgment all this is from the truth; though I am not sure that there is another man in the army, besides myself, that thinks so. I should guess, however, that there are many. But, tied up as my own mouth is, it is little to be wondered at, that theirs are so too, at least to me.

Thus circumstanced, can you point out a way in which it is possible for me to resign, just now, as it were on the eve of action, without the imputation of cowardice? There is no such way. Besides, diffident and desponding as I am, how do I know, that it is not so with those we have to oppose? they certainly have reason. The events of war depend on a thousand misadventures, without the ken of a mere bystander. I know not that the commander of the armies of the low countries, could his heart have been read as you do mine, had not the same fears, and the same causes for them that I have. You learn not this from the history, nor was it to be expected you should; yet, he succeeded at last: And, who knows, what an over-ruling Providence, who often brings about the greatest revolutions by the most unlikely means, may intend for America? If it be the will of God, that America should be independent of Great Britain, and that this be the season for it, even I and these unhopeful men around may not be thought unworthy instruments in his hands. And, should we succeed, we are heroes, and immortalized beyond even those of former times; whereas disgrace only, and intolerable infamy await our retreat. In

this persuasion, I resolve to go on; contented, with the glorious King William, to save my country, or die in the last ditch.

I am, my dear Lund,

Your faithful Friend and Servant,

G. W.

To John Parke Custis, Esq. at the Hon. Benedict Calvert's,
Esq. Mount Airy, Maryland.

MY VERY DEAR JACK,

YOU have exceedingly obliged me by your letter which I received by yesterday's post. It discovers an attention to the great affairs now carrying on, and an information concerning them, which I own to you I had not given you credit for. Your youth and inexperience pleaded your excuse; and though you gave me no opportunity to praise you for any active exertions, I paid you no ordinary compliments, in my own mind, for your modesty in forbearing to meddle with things which it was no reproach to you to confess, were out of your reach. Considering your rank, fortune, and education, whenever it is proper for you to come forward on the theatre, it must not be any underpart that you act. You are, therefore, certainly in the right, to decline taking any part at all, till you are fit for a first and leading character. And you have my full and perfect approbation of your resolution to persist in your purpose, for the present, not to accept of any rank, civil or military. I see your anxiety, lest the present opportunity for signalizing your just love for your country should, by your not unnecessary cautions, be suffered to slip by you, unimproved. Your ardour is commendable,

and far be it from me to discourage in you a spirit I so much love. But, whilst you retain these honourable principles, there is little danger of your wanting opportunities to call them forth into action. The momentous enterprize in which your country is engaged, is not to be accomplished in this or that year. If, in no longer a period than the siege of Troy, we bring all our mighty schemes to bear, it will be the greatest work that ever was perfected in so little a time. You have set your heart, you tell me, on a military employment. This is the usual bent of young men; and, as it was my own, it will be with an ill-grace that I reprehend it in you. But with the experience that I have had of it, I should be wanting in that love and esteem I owe you, should I hesitate to tell you, that, as your father, there is not a profession you could have chosen in which I should not more cordially have concurred with you. Yet, I love arms; I am married to my sword, as well as to your most amiable mother: and, herein is my witness, that I am in earnest when I say, death alone shall divorce me from either. I am not so blindly devoted, however, to my profession, as not to see by how frail a tenure I hold the little reputation I have in it. As a statesman, as a senator, it is in the general sufficient that you mean well, that you are careful to qualify yourself to form a right judgment of the true interests of your country, and that, with the honest impartiality of a freeman, you have still exerted your best endeavours to promote those interests: But, with a soldier, success alone is merit; and there is nothing that can atone for the want of it. The world is a worse judge of military matters, than any other. It would astonish you to find, on a minute comparison, how very little difference there was in the skill and spirit which guided Braddock and Wolfe in the last actions of their lives; but, how different has been their fate!—I think I am not without some talents for the line of life which has fallen to my lot; but opposed, as I must be, by men probably, of infinitely superior skill,

and encompassed moreover with such hosts of other difficulties and discouragements as I am, it is not mine to command success. And when either my cotemporaries, or future historians, shall sit in judgment on my conduct, if, haply, ill fortune should overtake me, seeing our miscarriages only, and having neither curiosity nor ability to investigate the thousand causes which led to them, am I not too well warranted in concluding, that they will be attributed to mismanagement? Have I not then reason to wish that your choice had fallen on the quieter but not less important calling of a private gentleman; in which, as a senator, you might have given proof of your abilities, in a way in which fortune would not have had so great a share? But notwithstanding all this, and if, after all, you be irrevocably determined to try your fortune in the field, and you can gain your mother's and your wife's consent, I here give it you under my hand, that you shall not want mine. Most certainly there cannot be a more honourable employment; and if (which heaven avert) fortune should declare against you, my consolation will be, that I can assure myself, you will deserve to be successful. I will, on the opening of the next campaign, procure you an appointment to the command of a regiment, either here, or in the southern wing. And, if my opinion may have any weight with you, you will, for many reasons, prefer the being stationed in some of the southern states. There is no fear of its being an inactive station. I have little expectation that this year will close with aught considerably decisive on either side; and if our enemies be able to hold out another campaign, it is most likely their policy will be, by means of their naval superiority, to carry on a kind of an incurfive war, by making unexpected descents in different and distant places. Meanwhile, permit me to press you to persevere in your attention to military matters. The manual exercise, which you were so justly diligent to learn whilst I was with you, is but the A, B, C, of your profession. Neither will

you profit so much as you might reasonably expect, from the study of those authors, who have written professedly on the art of war. This is like the learning the game of whist by reading Hoyle. I have been witness to the mischievous effects of it. A man, book-learned only, does very well in the still scenes of marchings and encampments. But when, in the various buffles of actual war, a cause arises, as must often be the case, not described in his books, he is utterly at a loss. I would not, however, have you to understand me as if I meant to discourage your reading these books, at all; so far from it, I would have you read them very often, and make yourself acquainted with the subject as much as you can, in theory. My caution meant only to guard you against placing too much reliance on them. Their best commentators, next to your own experience, will be the historians of Greece and Rome; which it is your happiness to be able to read in the originals. But, the main and most essential qualification is an high sense of honor, an elevation of sentiment, and a certain dignified stile of behaviour, that distinguishes, or should distinguish, a soldier from every other man. It is a shame indeed, if he who undertakes to command others, has not first learned to command himself. I will not endure any thing mean or sordid either in your principles, or your manners; having determined, if it were left with me, to be as strict and rigorous in these particulars, as were the knights of old, when a candidate was to be invested with the orders of chivalry. I cannot dissociate the ideas between a soldier and a gentleman: and however common it may be to give that last appellation to persons of every character, it yet conveys to me an idea of worth. I want words to express. I am not solicitous to pay you compliments, even by implication; but, I may certainly be permitted to say, that if I had not known you to be a gentleman, you never should have had my consent to your becoming a soldier.

Your observations on this important contest are just and accurate, and discover a reach of thought, and a penetration beyond what I had expected of you. What you say on the subject of independency is perfectly judicious, and, no doubt, highly worthy of all our most serious consideration. Yet, I have a presentiment, that it will take place, and speedily.—Open and unreserved as my conduct towards you has ever been, I have no reluctance to confess to you, that the measure is diametrically opposite to my judgment; for I have not yet despaired of an honorable reconciliation; and whilst I can entertain but an hope of that, both interest and inclination lead me to prefer it to every thing else upon earth. Human affairs are oddly ordered. To obtain what you most wish for, you must often make use of means you the least approve of: As in bargaining, to obtain a fair and equal price, you must frequently ask more than you wish to take. I do not really wish for independence; I hope there are few who do; but I have never heard the reasonings of those, who have proved that, if we did not declare for it, we should fail to obtain the constitutional subordination to which we are entitled, fairly refused. I would not have you, therefore, hastily conclude that if, in this struggle, we fall short of every thing we have claimed, we are worsted: Perhaps, the very worst thing that could befall us, is that we should gain all. I do assure you that, in my opinion, the next misfortune to that of being thrust from our just rank in the order of freemen, would be the giving us up, and leaving us to ourselves. But, this Great Britain will never do, voluntarily: for, if ever she does, whatever may become of us, from that moment, she may date the commencement of her own downfall.

I am exceedingly happy in the becoming moderation which you observe and endeavour to introduce towards the unhappy men whose political creeds differ from ours. But for this blot in her scutcheon, thrown on her by too many of her rash and unworthy advocates, by a contrary conduct, this

effort of America would have done her honour, even though she had failed. I am shocked at the instances of intolerance I daily hear of, and have no power to prevent. But, like the other evils of war, it is a calamity that unavoidably grows out of such a convulsion; and one might as well hope to stem the fury of a torrent, as to give laws to an enraged people. It is, however, the duty of every true friend to liberty, by every gentle and conciliatory means in his power, to restrain it. And, I am happy to find this sentiment daily becoming more general amongst us. All things considered, I cannot but think it not a little to our honour, that things have not been carried to a still greater height in this way.

Remember me affectionately to Nelly, and tell her, that though I should be happy to see her, I may not hope for that happiness speedily; as the din of arms, I imagine, would be but unpleasing entertainment to her; and I have little prospect of any leisure, at least before we go into winter quarters. I hope Mr. Calvert, and all the family are well: I beg to be remembered to them. I will write to your mother in a few days. You are very good in leaving her alone as little as may be. Continue to write to me frequently, freely, and fully; the hearing of my dearest friends' and family's welfare being the only true happiness I have any chance to enjoy amidst the perpetual hurry in which I live.

I am, my dear Jack,

Your very affectionate Friend and Father,

Geo. Washington.

June 18, 1776.

New-York, July 8, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Washington, at Mount Vernon, Fairfax County,
Virginia.

DEAR LUND,

WE are still going on with all imaginable briskness and success with our works, which I think are already impregnable. It would really astonish you to see the progress we have made. I do not believe that all history can furnish a precedent of so much being done in so little time, or in so masterly a manner, where you had so little right to look for consummate skill. If, in every thing else, we could but come up to our exertions in these fortifications, I should hardly know how to doubt the judgment of those who think that we may bid defiance to the world. But, I know not how it is, I am diffident of every thing. Whilst almost every body else seems to have persuaded himself, that we have nothing to fear, I alone torment myself with thinking that every thing is against us. Even from these very works, which have inspired us with such confidence, I anticipate only misfortune and disgrace. By this time the die is cast, and America is authoritatively declared free and independent; and unless we can be contented to appear ridiculous in the eyes of all the world, we must resolve to support this declaration by a suitable conduct:—we must fight our way to freedom and independency; for in no other way, shall we be permitted to obtain it, farther than words.

A war, therefore, and a most serious one, is now inevitable. Next to good finances, which it is not my province to provide for, a good army is, doubtless, a main requisite to the carrying on a successful war; and a good army, is by no means secured, as some seem to reckon, by securing a large number of men. We want soldiers, and between these, and raw, undisciplined men, there is a wide difference.

The question then is, how are these raw and undisciplined men to be formed into good soldiers? And I am free to give it as my opinion, that so far from contributing to this, will strong-holds, fortified posts, and deep intrenchments be found, that they will have a direct contrary effect. To be a soldier, is to be inured to, and familiar with danger; to dare to look your enemy in the face, unsheltered and exposed to their fire, and even when repulsed, to rally again with undiminished spirit. The Indian maxim is, that it is equally your duty to take care of yourself, and to annoy your enemy. To a general, this may not be an unuseful caution; but I will venture to assert, that whenever a private sentinel allows himself to act on this principle, the odds are, that, in the moment of trial, in his exceeding solicitude not to forget the former, the latter will be but little attended to. Now what, I ask, are all these mighty ditches and breast-works, but so many lessons and admonitions to our men of what prodigious importance it is to take care of themselves? It would be almost worth our while to be defeated, if it were only to train us to stand fire, and to bear a reverse of fortune with a decent magnanimity. If it had not been for this ill-judged humour of fighting from behind a screen, the 19th of April, and 17th of June last year, might have been the happiest days America ever saw. All these things have I, again and again, represented to my masters; I am ashamed to say, to how little purpose. They return me answers and instructions, which, though I cannot refute, have not yet convinced what I would call the feelings of my own mind.

This day week, the enemy's fleet was first descried off Sandy-Hook. They have been employed since then in debarking their troops on Staten-Island, where they are cantoned, as far as I can judge, in a very uncompact and unguarded manner. I cannot exactly ascertain their number, but I have reason to believe, that they fall short of seven thousand. It is more extraordinary still, that I am not able

to inform you of the exact number of forces under my own command: I fancy however, we might bring into the field, at this place, double their number at a minute's warning; and with this superiority of numbers, making all possible allowances for our other disadvantages, one would hope we might be able to give a good account of them. You, who are sanguine in the extreme, and all impatience, will eagerly ask, why we suffered them to land unmolested, and to remain so ever since. What excellent expeditions you fire-side generals can instantly plan and execute! But you forget that they are posted on an island, and that we have no way at coming at them, unless they would lend us their ships and boats, which I have not presumed to ask of them. Aware, however, of the importance of falling on them, whilst there is a chance of doing it with success, and ere they become a match for us, by reinforcements which they daily expect, I have formed a scheme, which, at least, is plausible, and promises fair to be successful. I have submitted it to Congress, and every moment expect their answer; and if they will but support me with alacrity, and in good earnest, my next, I trust, will not be so desponding. I expect to be all ready to put my plan in execution on Tuesday, or at farthest, on Wednesday night; so that probably, at the very moment you are reading this, we may be engaged in a very different service. You will, no doubt, be impatient to hear from me as soon as may be, after Wednesday, and I will not disappoint you. Meanwhile, I shall not need to tell you, that end how it will, all that I freely chatter to you, is to remain a profound secret to every body else.

Doctor, now Brigadier-General Mercer is here, and is a great comfort to me. Like myself, he wants experience; but he is very shrewd and sensible, and though a Scotoman, is remarkably humane and liberal. I have communicated the whole of my design to him alone; and am not ashamed to own, that I have received much assistance from him. I know

not how it may turn out ; but though neither he nor I are very apt to be sanguine, we have both confessed to be so on this occasion. Animated, however, as I feel myself with the near prospect of at length doing something, not unworthy the high rank to which I am raised, I own to you, I take a serious pleasure in it, only as it flatters me with the hope of thereby obtaining a speedier and happier peace. Let us, since war must be our lot, distinguish ourselves as freemen should, in fields of blood; still remembering, however, that we fight not for conquest, but for liberty.

I am with the truest esteem,

Dear Lund,

Your faithful Friend and Servant,

G. W.

New-York, July 16, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Washington, &c.

DEAR LUND,

HOW cruelly are all my hopes in one sad moment blasted and destroyed ! I am positively ordered to wait for the enemy in our lines ; and lest I should be mad enough not to obey their mandates, not a single tittle of any thing I had asked for, is granted. Thus has a second opportunity of rendering my country an essential service, in the way of my profession, been unwisely, and in the most mortifying manner denied me. I profess, I hardly know how to bear it ; having to regret not only, that two opportunities, such as may never again occur, have been suffered to pass by us unimproved, but that none can happen we can improve. Ma-

naged as matters are, we neither are, nor ever shall be a military people ; and yet, in the train in which things are now put, unless we are, it were idiotism to hope for either freedom or independence.

I remember well, in a conversation I once had with a friend, now most unjustly as well as unwisely driven from his friends and his home, on the subject of monarchies and republics, he objected to the unavoidable slowness and dilatoriness of the executive power in the latter. Aiming to answer him in his own way, I replied, that if Popular Councils were slow, they yet were sure, and that in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. His answer was prophetic. If ever (he said) we of these countries should rashly put these things to the proof, it would be found, that however true this adage might be in the cabinet, it was not so in the field. Convinced, by melancholy experience, that this is the case, and, that without some different system, we shall but expose ourselves to contempt and ruin, I resolve this evening honestly and openly to say so to the Congress. I will go farther, and add, that if they cannot in fact, as well as in appearance, trust me with the uncontrouled command of their army, I will no longer be their puppet. Why should I ? it being now morally certain that by going on as we have hitherto done, I can neither bring honour nor profit to them ; and yet am sure to lose all the little of either which I either have, or might have, possessed.

I want words to express to you what I have felt, and still do feel on this disappointment of all my hopes : I had allowed myself to build too much on my scheme ! and I seem to be in the situation of one who should be allowed to rise, on purpose only to be thrown down. The enemy, in the midst of all our blusterings, must despise us ; and did not shame, or some better principle restrain them, I should be but little surprised to find General Howe, even with his present little handful attacking us,—yes, attacking us in our entrench-

ments. What shall I do? To retreat is to entail on myself the curses of every public man in my country; and to go on is certain ruin and disgrace. Were the world to know only my true history on this trying occasion, I persuade myself, all the candid and considerate in it would acquit me of blame. But this the world can know only by my resolving to tell a tale, which, considering the rank I now hold in it, must involve my country in such internal broils and quarrels, as must be fatal to the glorious cause in which we have embarked; and this, I trust, I shall have the virtue never to do, be my private wrongs and sufferings ever so great.

I have finished my letter to the Congress, to whom I have at length spoken in a more peremptory tone, than, I fancy, they have been used to. It was absolutely necessary; and I should ill deserve their confidence, if through any mistaken complaisance or diffidence, I hesitated to point out to them the mischievous consequences of their interference. I have also insisted on precise instructions in what manner I am to conduct myself towards the British commissioners, if peradventure, as is probable, their overtures shall be made through me. Their answer will have a great influence on all my future measures; as I shall then know, (and surely it is time I should) on what ground I stand. The very decided and adventurous measures, which Congress itself has just taken, is big with the most important consequences, not only to the community at large, but to every man in it. The temper and judgment which they shall now manifest, on their first avowed assumption of the reins of government, will be indicative of what we may hereafter expect. Hoping for the best, I yet will watch them most carefully.

'Tis all fearful expectation: Every man I see seems to be employed in preparing himself for the momentous rencontre, which every man persuades himself must shortly come on. There is an ostensible eagerness and impetuosity amongst us, I could willingly have excused: I should have been better

pleased with that steady composure which distinguishes veterans. One thing is in our favour, the passions of our soldiery are seldom suffered to subside; being constantly agitated by some strange rumour or other. Happen what will, it can hardly be more extraordinary, than some one or other is perpetually prefaging: And we have already performed such feats of valour, whilst we have no enemies to engage but such as our own imaginations manufacture for us, that I cannot but hope we shall do well, merely because no one ever seems to entertain a suspicion that we shall not. I can as yet give no guess, where or when they will approach us: I conclude, however, that they will hardly stir, till they are joined by all the men they expect. Desponding as I am, I wish they were arrived; and that, at this moment, they were in a condition to attack us: They may gain by procrastination, but we are sure to lose.

I wrote to Mrs. Washington lately, and shall again in a week or two, if I do not hear of her ere that in Philadelphia. It has surprised me, that, after what I wrote, she should hesitate. I beg of you if she be still fearful, to second my persuasions by every means in your power. Exposed as she must be to so many interviews with people in the army, all of whom are in the way of the small-pox, I have the most dreadful apprehensions on her account. I know not well how the notion came into my head, but it is certain, I have, for several days, persuaded myself that she is already inoculated, and that, out of tenderness and delicacy, she forbears to inform me of it, till she can also inform me she is out of danger.

I note sundry particulars in your letter, to which I am not solicitous to give you answers. Why, when you have so often asked in vain, will you press me for Congress-secrets? Whatever your or my private sentiments or wishes may be, it is sufficient for us that we know the highest authority in our country has declared it free and independent. All that

is left for us to do is, as far as we can, to support this declaration, without too curiously enquiring into either its wisdom or its justice. I firmly believe, that the advocates for this measure, meant well; and I pay them but an ordinary compliment in thinking that they were fitter to determine on a point of this sort than either you or I are. At any rate, the world must allow it to be a spirited measure; and all I have to wish for is, that we may support it with a suitable spirit.

I am, my Dear Lund,

Yours most affectionately,

G. W.

New-York, July 15, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Washington, &c.

DEAR LUND,

LAST Friday, the British fleet was seen off Staten-Island; they have since been employed, uninterrupted by us, in debarking their men, stores, &c. and as they must now, I should imagine, be pretty nearly as strong as they expect to be this campaign, no doubt we shall soon hear of their motions. I have reason to believe, their first essay will not be on this, but on Long-Island; where injudiciously, I think, we also are, or soon shall be, in force. Yet, if we do but act our parts as becomes us, be the issue as it may, we shall at least give them no pleasing earnest of what they have to expect in the course of the war. But there is no relying on any plan that is to be executed by raw men.

You have heard much of the powers with which commis-

sioners were to be invested, for the purpose of settling this dispute. Like most other things belonging to it, these too have made a much greater figure in talk, than they do in fact. There are but two commissioners, the two Howes; and their powers are extremely vague and undefined. It is a pity, methinks, that Congress had not had better information on this subject; if they had, it is to be presumed, they would not have precipitated the declaration of independence, so as to preclude all possibility of negociation. I may venture to whisper in your ear, that this excepted, I firmly believe, that America might have carried every other point; and certainly, there was a time, when this would have been deemed a conquest beyond the warmest wishes of the warmest American. Whether in the present posture of affairs, it still be so, is another question: I can answer only for myself, that I would not even ask so much. Different men will judge differently with respect to this conduct on the part of Great-Britain; I own I am bewildered and puzzled to account for it. After such an astonishing expence as they have been at, and with such fair prospects as they have before them of being soon in a capacity to prescribe their own terms, it certainly is extraordinary to find them condescending to be friends with us, on conditions as mortifying and degrading to them, as they are flattering to us. I can account for it but in one way; I really ascribe it to their magnanimity. It must be an unpleasing contest to the nation: I say the nation; for however expedient it may be for us to have it called a ministerial war, no man who knows any thing of the English government, can imagine, that the ministry could have moved a step in it, if it had not been the sense of the nation. It must, too, be a most fruitless and unprofitable war; since every advantage they can gain, must in fact be a loss, as being gained over themselves. No wonder, therefore, they have been slow and backward to enter into it; no wonder they would be glad to be well rid of it, on almost any terms. I have ever been of

this opinion, and it was this persuasion alone that reconciled me to the measure of taking up arms. I see, however, the world around me viewing it in a different light; every concession that is made to us, they attribute to timidity only, and despondency. I own appearances make for this conjecture; and, no doubt, Congress will give it its sanction.

I have not adopted this opinion, that we might have peace with Great-Britain, on terms which would once have been thought most honorable, on slight grounds. Yesterday, a letter was brought to me, making overtures for a negociation, from Lord Howe. I had expected it; and had my instructions. It was addressed, as I had foreseen, to me as in my private character only. On the ground of independency, if we chose to maintain it, this was not a mere matter of punctilio; it was the critical moment of trial, whether we would assert, or recede from our pretensions. Never did men sit in debate on a question of higher magnitude: and when they had once determined to declare their country free, I see not why they might not support this their declaration, by this as well as other means. A contrary conduct would certainly have indicated some want of firmness. Yet, I confess to you, I felt awkward upon the occasion. The punctilio seemed, and it could not but seem, to be my own; and as such it looked, methought, as though I were proud of my titles. Put yourself in my place, and see me, longing as you know I do most earnestly for peace, yet turning my back on a gentleman, whom I had reason to consider as the harbinger of it, only because he asked for MR. and not, GENERAL WASHINGTON. How often it is my lot to find it my indispensable duty to act a part contrary to both my own sentiments and inclinations! But, if I mistake not, it is in such instances only, that, properly speaking, we manifest our fortitude and magnanimity.

I shall astonish you, when I inform you, that this first rebuff abated not the ardour of the noble commissioner. His

deputy paid us a second visit, and vouchsafed to honour me with the appellation of General. What name will you give to this condescension? I own it hurt me; and has well nigh led me into a train of thinking very different from all my former opinions. The gentleman who brought the message, is a Colonel Patterson, Adjutant General, and a sensible, well-informed man. He requested to speak to me alone; and I was glad he did. After the first salutations, he told me the purport of the letter which had been refused; and his errand now was to ask me to point out the most eligible means of opening a negociation, for the purpose of accommodating the unhappy dispute. I replied, that I knew but of one way; and that was by application to Congress. He said, the King's Commissioners would have no objection to treating with the members who composed the Congress, provided only that they came with legal authority from the regular Legislatures of their respective countries. I answered, they doubtless would come with such authority; as, indeed, they could come with no other. I evidently saw his drift in the exception, as he did mine: and to put a stop to all possibility of mistake, he declared it impossible for his masters ever to acknowledge the Congress, as such, a legal, and constitutional body of men; and as it seemed to be rather a punctilio of pride, than of any real importance, he hoped it might be waved. I stared: How, Sir, have you not already acknowledged the powers of Congress, by acknowledging the honourable rank I hold, and which I hold from them, and them only? That, said he, was the concession merely of politeness; and made for the purpose only of getting access to me; and he was persuaded, I was too sensible a man to lay any stress on so mere a trifle; I thanked him for his compliment, but assured him, that I meant to lay the most serious stress on it. If he really had had that opinion of my understanding which he was pleased then to express, he must have supposed, that though a trifle in itself, it ceased to be so after I had made a point of it.

Words could not have told him more strongly that our resolutions were to assert and maintain our independency. And if the commissioners of the King of Great-Britain found themselves either unable or unwilling to give up this, as a preliminary article, they and he must pardon me for saying, that I could but think them very idly employed in soliciting an interview with me. On this he prepared to take his leave, first adding with a degree of sharpness and animation, that I own affected me : Sir, said he, you are pleased to be cavalier with me : I consider you as a well-meaning—I wish I could say, well-informed man ; yet, I am mistaken, if your head, as well as your heart, would not, at this moment, dictate a very different language. There may be heroism, for ought I know, in desperately resolving to go all lengths with the men with whom you have connected yourself ; but it is madness : and you may be thankful, if posterity gives no worse a name to a man who has no judgment of his own. Wrong, Sir, your judgment no longer. We certainly have stooped as low as the proudest wrong-head among you could ask us ; but, if you really think, as you seem to affect to do, that we have made these overtures either from meanness, from a distrust of our cause, or our ability to make good our just claims, you are out in all your reckoning. That the mean and narrow-minded leaders of your councils may disseminate such opinions, in your unhappy country, I can easily suppose ; but remember, Sir, you, and your party, owe some account to the world ! and when the world shall come to know your infatuated insolence in the instance before us, as know it they must, think how you will excuse yourselves ? I replied with no less warmth, nor, I trust, dignity. I was, indeed, stung : for after once having owned me as a General, you must confess there was something singularly contemptuous in presuming thus to school me. A few personal civilities put an end to the conference.

I have transmitted a faithful account of it to Congress; but, as I can hardly suppose they will judge it expedient to make it public, I thought I owed to you, not wholly to disappoint your curiosity. You will not, however, need me to caution you to be secret, as well on this as on other things, which I write to you.

One thing more I must not omit to mention to you. In my conference with Colonel Patterson, I thought I could discover that it was intended I should be impressed with a persuasion that the commissioners thought not unfavourably of our pretensions, as urged in the beginning of the dispute. This is to be accounted for: They are whigs; and if I am rightly informed, the General owes his seat in Parliament to the interest of the dissenters. But why approve of our first pretensions only? Surely if we were then right, we are not now wrong: I mean as to what we have a right to, by the principles of the constitution; the expediency of our measures is now out of question. I cannot dissociate the ideas between our having a right of resistance in the case of taxation, and the same right in the case of legislating for us. You know I am no deep casuist in political speculations, but having happily been brought up in revolution principles, I thought I trod surely when I traced the footsteps of those venerable men. Wonderful! These too are the principles of our opponents; so that all our misfortune and fault is the having put in practice the very tenets which they profess to embrace.

But I shall exhaust your patience; which I should not do, foreseeing as I do, that I shall, hereafter, have occasion to put it to the trial.

I am with the truest regard,

Dear Lund,

Yours, &c.

G. W.

New-York, July 22, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Washington, &c.

I WISH I could say I thoroughly approved of all the new regulations in the new institution of government in my native state. It could, however, hardly have been expected, that a reformation so capital and comprehensive should be perfect at first; the wonder is, it is not still more exceptionable. My heart glows with unusual warmth, when I advert, as I often do, to that pure and disinterested ardour which must have animated the bulk of my countrymen throughout the whole of this controversy. There may be exceptions amongst us, and, no doubt, there are; but it is not fair to infer this from our uncommon impetuosity and violence. This one would wish restrained, but, by no means extirpated; for is it not the effect of a highly agitated public spirit; the mere effervescence of good principles thrown into a state of strong fermentation? And, surely, even precipitancy is preferable to the spirit-breaking cautions of chill despondency. Yet I am no advocate, in general, either for rash measures, or rash men; but at such a conjuncture as this, men had need to be stimulated by some more active principle than cool and sober reason. They must be enthusiasts, or they will continue to be slaves.

I give this in answer to my friend Mr. Carter's objections to the first procedures of the new government. No doubt, Henry is, in many respects, the unfittest man in the state for Governor of Virginia. He has no property, no learning, but little good sense; and still less virtue or public spirit; but he is the idol of the people; and, as it is by their means only that you can hope to effect the grand schemes which you have meditated, you must humour them, and indulge them with their rattle. They will soon tire of him; and the opportu-

nity must then be watched, gently to lead them to a better choice; for they may be led though they cannot be driven. And though it be, alas! but too true, that they often mistake their real interests, I am of opinion they never mistake them long. Sooner or later, they will judge and act from their settled feelings; and these, I take it, are generally founded in their settled interests. When great enterprizes are to be performed, we may well dispense with some little errors in judgment: when without that, we have, in its stead, that which perhaps we could not have with it; I mean that undisciplined ardour which is infinitely better adapted to our purposes.

There cannot be a more striking instance that the judgment of the people may, in general, be safely trusted, in the long run, than is to be met with in Virginia. Very few countries have to boast of more men of respectable understandings; I know of none that can produce a family, all of them distinguished as clever men, like our Lees. They are all of them the very men one would wish for, to take the lead of a willing multitude; for, they are certainly men of shining talents, and their talents are of that particular kind which usually render men popular. No men were ever more so, than the men in question once were. It is obvious, this is no longer the case; and the reason must be that they are no longer worthy of it. With all their cleverness, they are selfish in the extreme. The people, at length, have found this out; or, no doubt, R. H. Lee would have now been governor, the grand object of all his aims.

You would be mortified to hear the criticisms which are common here on Henry's inauguration speech. It is, indeed, a poor and pitiful performance; and yet I can believe, that set off by his smooth and oily delivery, it would appear clever when he spoke it. Why did he not ask Mr. Page to prepare it for him? There is not a man in America more capable. The counsellors of state are certainly irreproachable, and will do honour to those who appointed them. I am

particularly pleased with the success of my honest brother-in-law, Bat. Dandridge ; and the pleasure is not lessened by the assurance he makes me, that my letters were serviceable to him ; there being but few men whom I love more than I do him. As you are soon to go down the country, you will see him ; and therefore spare me the trouble of writing particularly to him. My friends must now be so indulgent to me, as to wave the matter of compliment ; I think myself happy, whenever I can write, as I should, on urgent business. You know how ticklish my situation is ; little as one would think, there is to be envied in it, I yet am envied. And though, in all good reason, their fears should take a direct contrary course, there are who are forever suggesting suspicions and jealousies of the army and its commander. My own heart assures me, I mean them no ill ; however, if I really have the influence and ascendancy which they suppose, I will, for their sakes as well as my own, hereafter maintain it at some little cost. A thousand considerations determine me to strain every nerve to prevent the army's being under any other controul, whilst I live. Let a persuasion of the necessity of this, if occasion should arise, be seasonably urged in my native state : and, in the mean while, let some more than ordinary pains be taken to make me popular. Their own honor and interest are both concerned in my being so. Shew this to Mr. Dandridge ; and, as you both can enter into my meaning, even from the most distant hints, I can rest satisfied, that you will do every thing I wish you.

We have lately had a general review ; and I have much pleasure in informing you, that we made a better appearance, and went through our exercises more like soldiers, than I had expected. The Southern states are rash and blameable in the judgment they generally form of their brethren of the four New-England states ; I do assure you, with all my partiality for my own countrymen, and prejudices against them, I cannot but consider them as the flower of the American army.

They are a strong, vigorous, and hardy people, inured to labour and toil; which our people seldom are. And though our hot and eager spirits may, perhaps, suit better in a sudden and desperate enterprize; yet in the way in which wars are now carried on, you must look for permanent advantages only from that patient and persevering temper, which is the result of a life of labour. The New-Englanders are cool, considerate and sensible; whilst we are all fire and fury: like their climate, they maintain an equal temperature, whereas we cannot shine, but we burn. They have an uniformity and stability of character, to which the people of no other states have any pretensions; hence they must, and will always preserve their influence in this great Empire. Were it not for the drawbacks and the disadvantages, which the influence of their popular opinions, on the subject of government, have on their army, they soon might, and probably would, give law to it. If General Putnam had the talents of Mr. S. Adams, or Mr. Adams had his, perhaps, even at this moment, this had not been matter of conjecture. But, Putnam is a plain, blunt, undesigning old fellow, whose views reach no further than the duties of his profession. He is, indeed, very ignorant; yet, I find him a useful officer; and chiefly because he neither plagues me, nor others, with wrangling claims of privileges. I owe him too no small acknowledgments for the fairness of his accounts. I could open to you some strange scenes in this way. Some people seem to have gotten such a habit of cheating government, that, though sufficiently conscientious in other respects, they really are far less scrupulous in their manner of charging than, I think, becomes them.— But, as I have often told you, General Mercer is the man, on whom these states must rest their hopes. The character that one of his countrymen gave to the Pretender, fits him exactly; “He is the most cautious man I ever saw, not to be a coward; and the bravest not to be rash.” In my judgment, he is not inferior even to General Lee, in military knowledge;

and, in almost every thing else, he is infinitely his superior. Yet the overbearing virtues of this last named gentleman are useful to us, especially at our setting out: we wanted not the sober and slow deductions of argument and reason: and Lee, like the author of *Common Sense*, has talents perfectly formed to dazzle and confound.

I thank you for your care in making the remittances you mention to Messrs. Carey and Co. I sincerely wish they may arrive safe; as I certainly owe it to them, to take every step in my power to make them easy. There is a pleasure in doing as one ought, in little as well as great affairs; but, in my present circumstances, I should often want this pleasure, were it not for your affectionate assiduity, and truly friendly attention. God bless you, my dear friend, for every instance of your care and concern for me!

I am, &c.

G. W.

June 24, 1776.

To Mrs. Washington.

MY DEAREST LIFE AND LOVE,

YOU have hurt me, I know not how much, by the insinuation in your last, that my letters to you have lately been less frequent, because I have felt less concern for you. The suspicion is most unjust;—may I not add, it is most unkind? Have we lived, now almost a score of years, in the closest and dearest conjugal intimacy to so little purpose that, on an appearance only of inattention to you, and which you might have accounted for in a thousand ways more natural and more

probable, you should pitch upon that single motive which alone is injurious to me? I have not, I own, wrote so often to you as I wished, and as I ought: But think of my situation and then ask your heart, if I be WITHOUT EXCUSE. We are not, my dearest, in circumstances the most favourable to our happiness: but let us not, I beseech you, idly make them worse, by indulging suspicions and apprehensions which minds in distress are but too apt to give way to. I never was, as you have often told me, even in my better and more disengaged days, so attentive to the little punctilios of friendship, as, it may be, became me: but, my heart tells me, there never was a moment in my life since I first knew you, in which it did not cleave and cling to you with the warmest affection: and it must cease to beat, ere it can cease to wish for your happiness, above any thing on earth.

I congratulate you most cordially on the fair prospect of recovery of your amiable daughter-in-law; nor can I wonder, that this second loss of a little one should affect you; I fear the fatigues of the journey, and the perpetual agitations of a camp, were too much for her. They are, however, both young and healthy; so that there can be little doubt of their soon repairing the loss.

And now will my dearest love permit me, a little more earnestly than I have ever yet done, to press you to consent to that so necessary, so safe and easy, though so dreaded a thing—the being inoculated? It was always adviseable; but at this juncture it seems to be almost absolutely necessary.

I am far from sure, that, that restless madman, our quondam Governor, from the mere lust of doing mischief, will not soon betake himself to the carrying on a predatory war in our rivers. And as Potomack will certainly be thought most favourable for his purposes, as affording him scope to keep without the reach of annoyance, I have little reason to flatter myself, that it would not be particularly pleasing to him, to vent his spite at my house. Let him; it would affect me

only as it might affect you; and, for this reason, among others, I wish you out of his reach. Yet I think I would not have you quit your house professedly from an apprehension of a visit from him: An appearance of fearfulness and timidity, even in a woman of my family, might have a bad effect; but, I must be something more or less than man, not to wish you out of the way of a danger, which, to say the least, must be disagreeable to you, and could do good to no one. All this makes for your going to Philadelphia, a place of perfect security; and it would be almost worth while to be inoculated, if it were only for the fair pretence it furnishes you with of quitting Virginia, at a time when I could not but be exceedingly uneasy at your remaining in it. But I flatter myself any further arguments will be unnecessary, when I shall add, as I now do, that till you have had the small-pox, anxiously as else I should wish for it, I never can think of consenting to your passing the winter here in quarters with me.

I would have Lund Washington immediately remove all the unmarried and suspicious of the slaves, to the quarters in Frederick. The harvesting must be got in by hirelings. Let him not keep any large stock of grain trod out, especially at the mill, or within the reach of water carriage; and in particular, let as little as may be, be left at Clifton's quarters. It will not be too late, even in the first week of July, to sow the additional supply of hemp and flax seed which Mr. Mifflin has procured for me in Philadelphia; and which I hope will be with you before this letter. For obvious reasons, you will not sow it on the island, nor by the water side. But I hope you will have a good account of your crop on the Ohio. If Bridgey continues refractory and riotous, though I know you can ill spare him, let him by all means be sent off, as I hope Jack Custis's boy Joe already is, for his fauciness at Cambridge.

My attention is this moment called off to the discovery, or pretended discovery, of a most wild and daring plot. It is

impossible, as yet, to develop the mystery in which it either is, or is supposed to be involved. Thus much only I can find out with certainty, that it will be a fine field for a war of lies on both sides. No doubt it will make a good deal of noise in the country; and there are who think it useful to have the minds of the people kept constantly on the fret by rumours of this sort. For my part, I who am said to be the object principally aimed at in it, find myself perfectly at my ease; and I have mentioned it to you only from an apprehension that, hearing it from others and not from me, you might imagine I was in the midst of danger that I knew not of.

The perpetual solicitude of your poor heart about me, is certainly highly flattering to me; yet I should be happy to be able to quiet your fears. Why do you complain of my reserves? Or, how could you imagine that I distrusted either your prudence or your fidelity? I have the highest opinion of them both. But why should I tease you with tedious details of schemes and views which are perpetually varying; and which therefore might, not improbably, mislead, where I meant to inform you? Suffice it that I say, what I have often before told you, that, as far as I have the controul of them, all our preparations of war aim only at peace. Neither do I, at this moment, see the least likelihood of there being any considerable military operations this season; and, if not in this season, certainly in no other. It is impossible to suppose, that, in the leisure and quiet of winter quarters, men will not have the virtue to listen to the dictates of plain common sense and sober reason. The only true interest of both sides is reconciliation; nor can there be a point in the world clearer, than that both sides must be losers by war, in a manner which even peace will not soon compensate for. We must, at last, agree and be friends; for we cannot live without them, and they will not without us; and a bye-stander might well be puzzled to find out, why as good terms cannot be given and ta-

ken now, as when we shall have well nigh ruined each other by the mutual madness of cutting one another's throats. For all these reasons, which cannot but be as obvious to the English commissioners, and ours, as they are to me, I am at a loss to imagine how any thing can arise to obstruct a negotiation, and, of consequence, a pacification. You who know my heart, know that there is not a wish nearer to it than this is; but I am prepared for every event one only excepted—I mean a dishonorable peace. Rather than that, let me, though it be with the loss of every thing else I hold dear, continue this horrid trade, and, by the most unlikely means, be the unworthy instrument of preserving political security and happiness to them, as well as to ourselves.—Pity this cannot be accomplished, without fixing on me that sad name, Rebel. I love my king; you know I do: a soldier, a good man cannot but love him. How peculiarly hard then is our fortune to be deemed traitors to so good a king! But, I am not without hopes, that even he will yet see cause to do me justice: posterity, I am sure, will. Mean while, I comfort myself with the reflection, that this has been the fate of the best and bravest men, even of the barons who obtained Magna Charta, whilst the dispute was depending. This, however, anxiously as I wish for it, it is not mine to command: I see my duty, that of standing up for the liberties of my country; and whatever difficulties and discouragements lie in my way, I dare not shrink from it; and I rely on that being, who has not left to us the choice of duties, that whilst I conscientiously discharge mine, I shall not finally lose my reward. If I really am not a bad man, I shall not long be so set down.

Assure yourself, I will pay all possible attention to your recommendations. But happy as I am in an opportunity of obliging you, even in the smallest things, take it not amiss, that I use the freedom with you, to whisper in your ear, to be sparing of them. You know how I am circumstanced: hardly

the promotion of a subaltern is left to me; and free and independent as I am, I resolve to remain so. I owe the Congress no obligations for any personal favours done to myself; nor will I run in debt to them for favours to others. Besides, I am mortified to have to ask of them, what, in sound policy (if other motives had been wanting) they ought to have granted to me unasked. I cannot describe to you the inconveniencies this army suffers, for want of this consequence being given to its commander in chief. But, as these might be encreased, were my peculiar situation in this respect generally known, I forbear; only enjoining on you a cautious silence on this head. In a regular army, our Virginia young men, would certainly, in general, make the best officers; but I regret that they have not now put it in my power justly to pay them this compliment. They dislike their northern allies; and this dislike is the source of infinite mischiefs and vexations to me. In the many disputes and quarrels of this sort which we have had, one thing has particularly struck me. My countrymen are not inferior in understanding; and are certainly superior in that distinguished spirit and high sense of honor which should form the character of an officer. Yet, somehow or other, it forever happens, that in every altercation, they are proved to be in the wrong; and they expect of me attentions and partialities which it is not in my power to shew them.

Let me rely that your answer to this will be dated in Philadelphia. If I am not very busily engaged, (which I hope may not be the case) perhaps I may find ways and means to pay you a visit of a day or two; but this I rather hint as what I wish, than what I dare bid you expect. If you still think the fragments of the set of greys I bought of Lord Botetourt unequal to the journey, let Lund Washington sell them singly, or otherwise as he can, to the best advantage, and purchase a new set of bays. I could as you desire, get them here, and perhaps on better terms; but I have a notion,

whether well or ill founded I know not, that they never answer well in Virginia. I beg to be affectionately remembered to all our friends and relations; and that you will continue to believe me to be

Your most Faithful

And tender Husband,

G. W.

THE END.



